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SUBJECT: CNDD BRIEFLY DETAINS NEWEST CUSTOMS DIRECTOR

REF: CONAKRY 00328

¶1. (U) Summary: The Guinean Customs Director was arrested and detained by order of CNDD President Moussa Dadis Camara and Minister of Defense Sekouba Konate for 24 hours. The arrest was apparently linked to the firing of Saran Kaba, a close friend of Konate,s, from a key position in Customs. This incident, as well as the firing of two other Customs Directors in the past six months, has helped create a chaotic environment at Customs, with employees only able to guess at what might come next. END SUMMARY.

A GAME OF MUSICAL CHAIRS

¶2. (U) Alpha Yaya Diallo was appointed as Customs Director on June 8, 2009 after Dadis publicly berated and fired his predecessor, Mamady Toure, for contradicting his claims of economic stagnation (reftel). Diallo, chosen from the crowd during Dadis' theatrical firing of Toure, was one of the original 32 members of the CNDD and is also a 15-year customs agent. According to government communiques, Diallo took office promising reforms throughout the notoriously corrupt department. As a public part of this campaign, he fired his customs auditor, Saran Kaba, on July 29, claiming that she was involved in corrupt activities.

¶3. (SBU) Kaba served as the Custom Auditor for more than 15 years, and was reportedly enraged by the event. According to sources at Customs, she allegedly went directly to Camp Alpha Yaya and presented her complaints to her close friends: Konate and Dadis. Within a few hours, individuals from the military brought Diallo to the military base, where he remained in detention for 24 hours.

¶4. (SBU) According to sources at Customs, Dadis and Konate apparently demanded that Diallo reinstate Kaba immediately. There were no reports of mistreatment during the 24 hour detention, and Diallo returned to work on Monday. Reportedly, Kaba has not yet been reinstated as the Customs Auditor.

¶5. (U) Though this is the first time that Diallo has been publicly reprimanded by the CNDD, Customs has been in a constant state of upheaval since the junta government took power in December. Mamady Toure, Diallo,s predecessor and a close friend of Dadis, was appointed as Customs Director at the end of January 2009. He assumed the position after Dadis fired Olga Siradine, a woman who held the position for nearly ten years. At the time, many believed that Toure's connection to Dadis' inner circle guaranteed him the highly lucrative position. When he challenged Dadis, power in June however, he was promptly sacked despite his personal connections.

COMMENT

¶16. (SBU) Diallo, a supporter of the CNDD, has overseen a wave of firings and reforms at Customs in the past month. His "anti-corruption" campaign forced out several old officers, leaving many positions unfilled, including that of the Deputy Customs Director. The firing of Kaba, while an immediate catalyst for detaining Diallo, is not the first politically insensitive decision that Diallo initiated in his short tenure. However, the incident serves as yet another example of Dadis' seemingly fickle handling of government affairs.

¶17. (SBU) The incident also highlights the lack of functional hierarchy within the government. That Dadis should personally intercede instead of a minister or even Prime Minister suggests that he has effectively centralized power in his own hands and is prepared to deal at levels far beneath his authority to maintain his grip on decisions. This management style has already led to a bottleneck at the presidency and elsewhere within the government.

BROKENSHIRE